8: Murphy & Steward E-5 (1952-1953) 1956
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13
Montagnais NH6

Mu 178 621

to the disorganization of Cururú River society. The political authority of appointed "chiefs" was now a means of extending the influence of the whites. The continuing migration of young men from the remaining primitive villages of the savannahs caused an oversupply of men on the Cururú River, and conflicts over women became rife. Owing to the endless squabbles in villages which had lost their aboriginal basis of integration, dissidents moved off to live at their rubber avenues or formed new and smaller villages. This fission process is still going on. Concomitantly, the Mission and the Indian Post are becoming more important as focal points in a new mode of integration of the Mundurucú. Over one-third of the Cururú River population make their rainy season homes at these agencies, which serve as centers of trade and of social and religious gatherings. It is from the Post and Mission, also, that the lines of authority now radiate.

Mu [578]

IV. Comparative Summary

Mu Mo 177 171 439 452

The accompanying table and chart present the major phases of acculturation in summary form, as abstracted from the historical continua. The basic acculturative factors in both cases exerted parallel influences, although the two societies were substantively different until the final culmination was reached. There were four causal factors common to each. First, both became involved in a mercantile, barter economy in which the collector of wild products was tied by bonds of debt and credit to particular merchants. Such involvement also occurred widely among native peoples who produced crops or livestock. This arrangement must be distinguished from cash transactions, in which, owing to the impersonality of money as a medium of exchange, the primary producer has greater freedom of choice as to with whom he will deal. In a pure credit-barter economy, all transactions are based on a personal relationship between the principals; the merchant must be able to rely upon the continued patronage of the primary producer whereby the latter liquidates past debts while assuming new ones. It seems to be a basic procedure that the pre-literate Indian is kept in debt by the trader. While the latter can manipulate accounts at will, and no doubt is frequently guilty of malfeasance, he usually allows the Indian to buy beyond his means. The debtor-producer is selling his future production, and the creditor will not extend payment unless assured of delivery. Where such an economy is found, it is common for merchants to refuse to deal with primary producers who are in debt to another merchant. This is a "gentleman's agreement" in the Amazon, although it is frequently violated by wandering traders. Second, the growing ties of dependency upon the traders are at the expense of collective bonds within the respective societies. Reliance upon individuals and institutions outside the native social system are intensified by a steady increase in demand and need for manufactured goods. This, as we have seen, goes beyond the mere initial allure of Western tools and ornaments. Luxuries soon became necessities--a process that can be found in our own culture. Third, while crude latex and animal furs are very unlike articles, they imply a common cultural-ecological adaptation. Both are natural products having a reliable occurrence in worthwhile quantity within an area which can be most efficiently exploited by one man. Both require conservation, for careless exploitation can seriously reduce the number of furbearing animals, or render rubber trees worthless. The producer has an incentive to maintain the productivity of his resources. Finally, both rubber trees and fur animals are sufficiently dispersed to require that persons exploiting them live or work at some distance from one another.

Mu Mo 171 177 439 [434]

Mu Mo [433]

These factors of change were essentially the same among both Mundurucú and Montagnais, and they were introduced through contact with the outside world. Their initial effects upon the aboriginal cultures were somewhat dissimilar, owing to aboriginal differences between the two groups. Whereas the Mundurucú chief served at first as intermediary with the trader, this seems not to have been true of the Montagnais chief. Montagnais family heads, however, traded on behalf of their sons. For a short time, this pattern was followed by many

Mo Mu 171 177 439 622

[their customers on p. 349]

12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

439 that carry only ten tons of cargo. This limitation prohibits the diversified economy of the lower Tapajós from developing further upstream, for the only worthwhile product in terms of transportation costs is natural rubber, which sold in 1952 for the artificially supported price of Cr. $25 (approximately U.S. $0.75 at the open-market rate of exchange then prevailing) per kilogram at the government-operated Rubber Bank of Brazil in Belém.

439 The economic hierarchy of the Tapajós River consists
452 of the company, with headquarters in Belém; the patrons, who are by necessity customers of the company; and the rubber collectors, who are the clients of particular patrons. Transactions between all parties are made on credit. The company advances commodities to the traders and the latter to the rubber collectors against expected deliveries of rubber. Very little cash passes hands.

439 The river valley can be conceived of as a socioeconomic
621 unit for it is bound together by economic ties from the
648 company through the patron down to the rubber collector; and to the man born on the river, it is the only world he knows. Most ties of kinship, marriage, and friendship are confined to the river banks from the rapids to the limits of Brazilian penetration on the São Manoel and Juruena rivers. Most of the approximately 2,000 inhabitants of this huge region are either personally acquainted or have knowledge of each other.

621 Within the broad social framework imposed by the river
648 system, the local community consists of the patron and his dispersed rubber-collecting clients. The patron serves as the focal point of community life: he is usually the *padrinho*, or godfather, of the customer's children; it is at his house that devotions to the saints are usually held; it is there that secular festivals such as dances occur; and his store serves as the gathering place on Sundays or alternate

12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

said, "Because it is beautiful there." Caetano recovered, and the unpopular Biboi returned to Cabitutú.

Today, the role of the chief as intermediary for his village with the traders is a fiction. The intricate trading system of Cabruá will be discussed below, but it must be mentioned here that the traders weigh each man's rubber production separately and give him his own credit, and each person's purchases are also separately charged to his own account. But all transactions are conducted in the presence of the chief, and he voices his followers' requirements of merchandise. Since it is convenient to the interests of the traders that the people feel they owe to the chief, the latter is charged with the combined accounts of his followers, and he is therefore expected to encourage their productivity. Despite this ruse, persons who are deeply in debt are refused further credit while those with only a small debt or a credit are given merchandise. The fiction of the chief's position is partly maintained, however, which tends to integrate his body of immediate followers. But the people understand, however imperfectly, that their fortunes and those of the chief are not identical and that the hard worker receives goods while the shirker does not, no matter how much the chief is said to owe.

The ultimate effect of trade probably will be to individualize commercial transactions further, and the office of chief will then lose almost all function. Its contemporary weakness, combined with the factionalism latent in the creation of patrilineages in a matrilocal society, have made it the center of controversy. However, the chieftaincy continues to symbolize the identity of the village, and, despite its stormy aspects, the decline of the institution is directly related to the progressive disorganization of village life.